

The Blue & Gray



November 2005

The Official Newsletter of the Georgia Department of Public Safety



Colonel's Corner



Colonel Bill Hitchens, Commissioner

During this past month, several unexpected events have occurred that took me on a couple of trips down memory lane, some of which I'd like to share with all you.

The death of Capt. Johnny Robertson, my first Troop Commander and the last living graduate of the 1st Georgia State Patrol Trooper School, caused me to reminisce about our department and the men and women who have made it what it is today. Certainly Capt. Robertson, who came out of Trooper School as a corporal, along with his classmates built the foundation upon which today's agency stands. As I spoke about him during the funeral, I remembered him as being very serious minded, as well as a stern disciplinarian and supervisor. But I also reflected that he was a product of the environs from which he came. He was 8 years old when World War I concluded, 19 when the depression struck and 27

when he went to Trooper School. When he was 31, World War II broke out and he was called back into the Army. As one who rose from humble origins, with the equivalent of elementary school education, he rose to the rank of captain in the U.S. Army and was a company commander and then a provost marshal in the European Theatre. He retired from the Army Reserve as a lieutenant colonel.

All of us who ever worked for Capt. Robertson will always remember the sign on his desk which read, "I may not always be right, but I'm always the boss." He was known as "The Bull." During the 1969 Thanksgiving Holiday Weekend there were 43 fatalities, which is still a Thanksgiving Holiday record. At that time, we worked 9 hours during the week and 10 hours on weekends (There was no FLSA). In response to the horrific holiday weekend, he traveled to all 8 posts in our troop and spoke to the troopers. He asked everyone to "volunteer" to work 10 hours during the week and 11 hours on the weekends. Naturally, everyone "volunteered." The fatality counts for Christmas and New Year's were greatly reduced.

Just three days following Capt. Robertson's funeral, after a 21 year effort by the personnel of Post #11, Hinesville and their local legislative delegation, a section of I-95 was dedicated as "Fallen Troopers Highway," in honor of the 25 members of the Department of Public Safety who have lost their lives in the line of duty. Also dedicated was the "Trooper Ronnie O'Neal Bridge." In the early morning hours of January 10, 1984 Trooper Ronnie O'Neal was killed in a high speed chase on I-95 when his vehicle was rammed by the vehicle he was pursuing. At the time, I was the post commander in Savannah and I had known Ronnie the entire 14 years he was assigned to Hinesville, which bordered our post territory. I still vividly remember the solemn days following his tragic death. In particular I remember Ronnie's wife Meryl and their two teenage daughters Dawn and Beverly, and how strong they were during what were certainly the worst days of their lives. During my remarks at the dedication, I made the mistake of looking over at Meryl with her now grown daughters and her grandchildren, and I couldn't help but become emotionally affected and momentarily lost my train of thought. Then both SFC John Long and Ronnie's daughter Dawn spoke very emotionally about their respective friend and father, and almost all of us in attendance found ourselves wiping back tears.

During my remarks at the dedication, I repeated the following quote that I once heard, "When one lives on in the hearts of those they leave behind, they never die." It was obvious to me at both Capt. Robertson's funeral and at Trooper O'Neal's dedication, that so many of those who knew them, along with many of today's employees who never met either one but still took the time to attend, even though many had to drive great distances, that both will forever live in the annals of the history of the Department of Public Safety.

For a couple of months now the Public Information Office has been attempting to get good photographs of all 25 whose selfless sacrifice resulted in the ultimate price. Their photos are being framed for display in the Blue Conference Room, under the heading, "Lest We Forget!" I think it is very important for us to express our appreciation to those who have made the ultimate sacrifice as well as their families. It also serves to remind us and all those who will view those photos of the ever present threat of danger that exists in our profession. And I truly hope and pray that we will never have to hang any additional photos on that wall!

I have always been proud of the Department and those who have served so faithfully and often valiantly since 1937. We have come through good times and bad with our heads held high with pride. I have every confidence that as we approach our 70th anniversary, we will continue to serve the citizens of Georgia with a dedication that would make those who have gone before us proud. And I always tell people across this great state, that our troopers will always, "Stand Tall for Georgia."

Thanks for all you do!

Capt. Johnnie Robertson



1937
1st Trooper School

Cpl. - Swainsboro

Captain - Troop F

1970
Retired

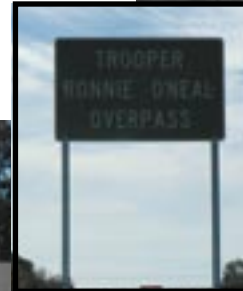


Trooper Ronnie O'Neal

1970
38th Trooper School

TFC - Hinesville

1984
Killed in the
Line of Duty



A Message from the Lt. Colonel

I hope you enjoyed the Thanksgiving Holiday with your family and friends and that everyone was safe. As you know, during the holiday season our men and women of the Department of Public Safety patrol Georgia's roadways to enforce safe driving in an effort to reduce injuries and fatalities during this highly traveled season.

The Thanksgiving holiday period 102-hour is the heaviest traveled, longest, and deadliest holiday period of the year. The 102-hour holiday period began on Wednesday, November 23 at 6 p.m. and ended at midnight Sunday, November 27. Our department focused on reducing fatalities and injuries, strictly enforcing seat belt laws, zero tolerance on DUIs and the new move over law which stresses that drivers move-over for emergency vehicles stopped on the side of the highway. The law is meant to keep officers and traffic violators safe from crashes with passing cars.

During the holiday period, we experienced 3,155 traffic crashes, 794 injuries and 19 deaths (six more than the holiday predictions). Despite the higher than anticipated number of crashes and deaths, your efforts to make the roads safe did not go unnoticed and is greatly appreciated.

Thank you to all of the men and women of this department who enforce our laws and help keep families safe and a special thank you to those in support roles for what you do to help us complete our mission. You are to be commended for a job well done!

You may have noticed the new look of our departmental newsletter. This change was made to represent the inclusion of Capitol Police and the Motor Carrier Compliance Division into the department. You will also notice future changes on our website will include all units of public safety.



Lt. Colonel Arthur White

2005 DPS Awards Ceremony

Military Service Recognition



(l-r) front to back: TFC David Randally, Lyle, TFC John Taylor, Jr., TFC J. D. Perry, III, TFC David Allen, TFC Michael Allen, TFC Reggie Magwood, Sgt. Steve M. Strickland, and Tpr. Garry Moss, Jr.

Valor



(l-r) front to back: Lt. W. H. Bryant, Cpl. Jim Underwood, Cpl. Ken White, Sgt. Josh Lamb, and TFC John G. Thomas.

Lifesaving



(l-r) front to back: TFC Mark Bracewell, Cpl. Ritchie Howard, Sgt. W. M. Ellis, TFC Brian Abney, Cpl. Herbert Craven, TFC Brent Marxsen, TFC Craig Smith, TFC John Cronin, TFC Donald R. Stewart, TFC Justin Thomas, TFC Jason Ellis, TFC S. J. Shelton, TFC J. L. Collier, and Police Cpl. Anthony Hughes.

Safe Driving



(l-r) front to back: Capt. E. J. Hamby, M/Tpr. D. J. Chadwick, M/Tpr. Kevin Turner, SFC J. Q. Butler, and M/Tpr. R. K. White.

2005 DPS Awards Ceremony

Commissioner's Commendation



(l-r) front to back: Sr. Tpr. David Doehla, TFC William Lovell, TFC J. E. Hutcheson, TFC Jason Davis, and Lt. Greg Mercier.

Commissioner's Commendation



Commissioner's Commendation: Criminal Interdiction Unit (CIU).

Proficiency



(l-r): Proficiency Award: Cheryl Buie, Linda McElroy and Tami Hurst.

State Merit System Public Employees Recognition Nominees



(l-r) front to back: Roy Jackson - Humanitarian, Dan Roach - Leadership, Headquarters Communications - Team Award, Allison Hodge - Customer Service, and Sgt. W. M. Ellis, II - Heroism.

Around *Georgia ...*

GSP Gears Up for Click It or Ticket Campaign



State troopers across Georgia kept a close eye out for occupant protection violations during the Nov. 21 - Dec. 4 wave of Operation Click It or Ticket (CIOT), Georgia's high visibility seat belt enforcement program. During a CIOT press conference, Colonel Bill Hitchens stated "Properly wearing a seat belt and taking the time to properly restrain children in a motor vehicle are the best protection measures you can take to survive a traffic crash."

Team DPS Participates in Annual Breast Cancer Awareness Walk



DPS staff members from headquarters participated in the annual "Making Strides Against Breast Cancer" three-mile walk in October. Team DPS members included: Edna Freeman (Lt. Col. White's Ofc.), Deborah Brownlee (Legal Services), Vicky Simpson, Brenda Merritt, Eric Harris and his daughter Zoe (Computer Services, Tracy Sanders (Planning), Shana Brown (Open Records Unit), and Franka Young (PIO). Other team members who were unable to participate in the walk were Rosa Blount (SWAT), Jackie Thurman and Dan Roach (Personnel Services).

MCCD Officers Prepare for Thanksgiving Holiday Enforcement



The Motor Carrier Compliance Division discussed plans to step up enforcement efforts for people who did not wear their seat belts or properly restrain children during the 102-hour Thanksgiving travel period. During the holiday period, there were 3,155 traffic crashes, 794 injuries and 19 deaths (six more than the holiday predictions).

Youth Program Visits DPS

Troopers from SWAT, CIU, Governor's Task Force, Nighthawks, and recruiting discussed their specialized fields with students from the Holy Innocence Episcopal School. The presentation was a part of the school's leadership development program which exposes the fifth grade boys to leadership roles in various organizations.

